

Message Text

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13

ACTION ARA-20

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 3531

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, AR

SUBJ: PURGE IN FOREIGN MINISTRY

REF: PARIS 7838

1. SUMMARY: THE WIDE-SCALE FIRINGS OF FOREIGN MINISTRY PERSONNEL OVER THE PAST MONTHS HAVE REACH PURGE PROPORTIONS. HOWEVER, NO CLEAR PATTERNS HAVE EMERGED. THE PURGE SEEMS ALMOST ARBITRARY IN NATURE. PERONISTS AS WELL AS ANTI AND NON PERONISTS ARE BEING DROPPED, AND NON PERONISTS AS WELL AS PERONISTS BROUGHT IN OR PROMOTED. SEVERAL PROMINENT NON PERONISTS, SUCH AS DE LA PLAZA IN URUGUAY, HAVE BEEN GIVEN IMPORTANT AMBASSADORIAL POSTS. END SUMMARY.

2. CONTROVERSIAL "LEY DE PRESCINDIBILIDAD" (UNDER WHICH CIVIL SERVANTS CAN BE FIRED) AND NEED TO HAVE ALL SENIOR FONMIN OFFICIALS WHO WERE APPOINTED DURING 1966-73 PERIOD OF MILITARY RULE CONFIRMED BY SENATE (SINCE THERE HAD BEEN NO CONGRESS DURING THOSE YEARS TO FULFILL CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENT FOR CONFIRMATION), GAVE PERONIST ADMINISTRATION
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TWO POWERFUL INSTRUMENTS TO RESHAPE THE ARGENTINE DIPLOMATIC

SERVICE TO SUIT ITS OWN NEEDS. BOTH MEASURES HAVE BEEN AND APPARENTLY WILL CONTINUE TO BE USED LIBERALLY. ONE WELL PLACED SOURCE IN THE FONMIN RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFF THAT OF THE SOME 750 ARGENTINE FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS AND MINISTRY OFFICIALS, AS MANY AS 300 MAY EVENTUALLY BE FIRED OR FORCED INTO RETIREMENT. SOME ARGENTINE EMBASSIES APPARENTLY HAVE BEEN DECIMATED (SEE REFTEL).

3. AXE-WIELDING AT THE MINISTRY, THEN HAS REACHED PURGE PROPORTIONS. IT HAD BEEN EXPECTED THAT IT WOULD ASSUME A CLEAR POLITICAL PATTERN, THAT ANTI AND NON PERONISTS WOULD BE DROPPED WHILE PERONISTS WOULD BE PROMOTED. IN THE EVENT, HOWEVER THAT HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE. MOST OUTSPOKEN ANTI-PERONISTS HAVE BEEN FIRED, RETIRED OR HAVE RESIGNED. OTHERWISE THE PURGE IS NOT FOLLOWING OBVIOUSLY POLITICAL LINES OR INDEED ANY OTHER CLEARLY DISCERNIBLE PATTERNS. SOME NON-PERONISTS HAVE BEEN DROPPED BUT OTHERS HAVE BEEN RETAINED AND EVEN PROMOTED. PERONISTS AS WELL AS NON PERONISTS HAVE BEEN FIRED AND AT THE SAME TIME A NUMBER OF LONG TIME MEMBERS OF THE UCR (THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY) HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BACK INTO THE MINISTRY. SOME OBVIOUS INCOMPETENTS HAVE BEEN AXED; OTHERS WITH WIDESPREAD REPUTATIONS FOR INCOMPETENCE HAVE BEEN PROMOTED. SOME OFFICIALS APPOINTED BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN DROPPED, OTHERS HAVE BEEN RETAINED. IN SHORT, THE PURGE SEEMS TO BE FOLLOWING NO PERCEIVABLE GUIDELINES.

4. MINISTRY SOURCES HAVE CAUTIOUSLY SUGGESTED TO EMBOFFS A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE MOTIVES BEHIND THE PURGE--NONE OF WHICH IN THEMSELVES ARE VERY CONVINCING. SOME SAY IT REPRESENTS A STRUGGLE BETWEEN CLIQUES OR TENDENCIES. OTHERS MAINTAIN THE PURGE HAS SIMPLY GIVEN A NUMBER OF SENIOR OFFICIALS A CHANCE TO TET BACK AT ALL WHO HAVE SLIGHTED OR DISAGREED WITH THEM OVER THE YEARS. DISGRUNTLED OFFICERS OFTEN TO BLAME FONMIN VIGNES FOR THE EXISTING STATE OF AFFAIRS.

5. WHATEVER THE REAL MOTIVATING FORCES BEHIND THE PURGE, THE FACT IS THAT IT IS CREATING A SERIOUS MORALE PROBLEM IN THE MINISTRY-- AND WE ASSUME IN POSTS ABROAD. THE VERY ARBITRARINESS OF THE PROCESS DEEPENS THE GLOOM AT THE MINISTRY.
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AS ONE OFFICIAL PUT IT: "NO ONE CAN BE SURE THAT HE WILL NOT BE THE NEXT ONE FIRED."
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